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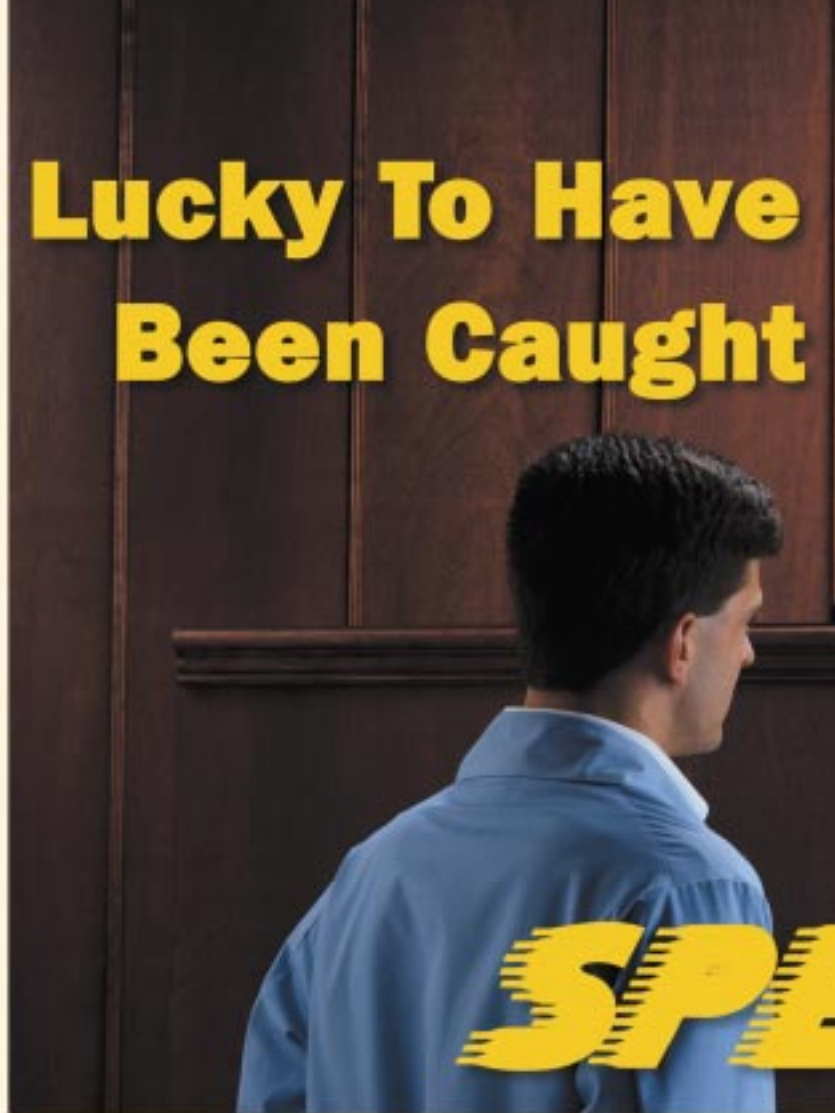
During my commute to work one morning, I witnessed an event that has become all too familiar. A speeding car came up behind me, passed, and then swerved around a long line of cars in an insane attempt to get somewhere just a little quicker. As this guy sped out of sight, I thought, “It would be great if a police officer was sitting around the next bend to catch this guy before he killed someone or himself.” No such luck.

My story continues when, later that day, a colleague told me about when his son was ticketed for speeding during his return trip to college months ago. Apparently a police officer was waiting around the bend for his son, and the son was ticketed for going 95 mph in a 65-mph zone. In addition to a \$250 speeding ticket, the youth was summoned to traffic court. The sentence handed to him included a 90-day suspended driver’s license, he received five points on his driver’s record (which stay for seven years), and he had to perform 250 hours of community service. The youth also had to pay \$50 court costs, was ordered to attend a driver’s course (at a cost of \$150), and was sentenced to 10 days in jail. Fortunately for him, jail was suspended under the condition he completed the driver’s course and was not ticketed for speeding in that particular city for the next six months. The judge made it clear that, not only would the young fellow serve 10 days in jail if ticketed again, but an additional 10 days would be added to his sentence for a second offense. As is often the case, my colleague was paying his son’s auto insurance. However, he was notified shortly after this incident that the entire family’s auto policy was being dropped. His son’s annual premium more than doubled when he reapplied at another auto insurer.

This youth, I am quite certain, learned his lesson. Others, though, have learned the perils of speeding in a much harder way. The following are some motor vehicle safety mishap reports received by the Naval Safety Center.

☞ A Sailor overcompensated for a sharp turn at 100 to 105 mph. He lost control of his car, hit a telephone pole on the passenger side, and ripped off the passenger-side door. His passenger was ejected.

Lucky To Have Been Caught



After hitting the pole, the car went into a left spin and began to roll onto its right side, rolling several times before hitting another telephone pole. Both the Sailor and his passenger were pronounced dead at the scene. Both were wearing their seat belts.

☞ Another Sailor speeding westbound on a highway lost control and struck a guardrail with his motorcycle. The Sailor’s right leg and two fingers on his right hand had to be amputated.

☞ While operating a newly purchased motorcycle, a Sailor was killed when he was thrown into the southbound lanes at the foot of a bridge. According to the highway patrol, the Sailor was traveling north at excessive speed when he failed to negotiate a curve as he left the bridge. The motorcycle hit the center divider, and the Sailor was hurled across the roadway into the opposing southbound lanes, where several cars ran over him.

☞ Two Sailors were involved in a head-on collision while traveling north on a narrow, two-lane, paved road. Police listed the probable cause of the crash as a combination of speed and poor driving



conditions (slippery surface, windy, and with numerous tight curves). The skid marks indicated the driver probably lost control in a tight corner at the base of a steep incline, then crossed into the lane where a truck was coming down the incline from the opposite direction. Both Sailors died from injuries.

Finally, a Sailor noticed he was passing his exit ramp, so he swerved in an attempt to reach the exit. He lost control of his speeding vehicle, which rolled over onto its roof. The driver was wearing a seat belt, two passengers were not. This second Sailor was partly ejected through the sunroof, and the vehicle crushed him.

I had many mishap reports from which to choose when selecting these examples. The No. 1 killer of Sailors and Marines is the car. Excessive speed is often listed as the contributing cause in the mishaps. From the start of the FY96 fiscal year to the conclusion of FY00, 59 percent of Navy and Marine Corps deaths were the result of vehicle mishaps. That 59 percent equates to 1,025 deaths. Compare this mishap rate to the one percent killed during afloat operations,

or the 16 percent killed in aviation mishaps during the same time period. Uncounted family members and friends were left behind to grieve for loved ones.

It is unfortunate that, because driving has become a daily event for most of us, we do not give speeding the serious attention we should. That doesn't diminish the dangers or seriousness of speeding, though.

You should make a decision to always drive within established speeds and constantly reaffirm your commitment to obey posted speed limits. With good time management, you'll find you can get to your destination on time without speeding. The immediate benefits to making this choice include not only the obvious reduction in risks, but also the saved wear and tear on your vehicle, better gas mileage, and reduced stress while driving.

Another way to avoid speeding is by allowing yourself enough time to get where you are going. For instance, it is better to plan your departure to allow you to arrive 10 to 15 minutes early, rather than arriving on time or five minutes late. This way you can feel relaxed while driving instead of feeling rushed and more willing to accept the risks of speeding. Remember also that speeding presents additional risks but does not present a significant amount of time saved. How often has a car passed you in a hurry only to have you catch up to it at the next traffic light? Don't become careless about driving at excessive speeds. You may get away with it for awhile, but it only takes one mistake or one unexpected event to make things go seriously wrong.

By making a conscious, before-the-fact decision not to speed, and by practicing your time management, you can make sure your vehicle means freedom, independence, and fun, instead of death, pain and suffering. You can also think of it as personal operational risk management. ☺

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For More Info...

Refer to OpNavInst 5100.12G, Issuance of Navy Traffic Safety Program.